

THE  
*Vengeance of GOD,*  
16 AND THE  
*Impenitency of Men,*

DEMONSTRATED,

In the Country's being laid waste in  
*Blood and Misery;*

WHILE

The Inhabitants, particularly in *Edinburgh*, are  
rioting in *Lewdness* and *Vice*, and encouraging  
that *Source of Wickedness*, the *Play-house*.

WITH

An *ABSTRACT*, shewing the *Danger*  
and *Sinfulness* of the *Stage*.



EDINBURGH,

Printed by T. Lumisden and J. Robertson, and sold at their  
Printing-house in the *Fish-market*, and by the Book-sellers  
in Town. 1747.

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 AND THE  
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AN ABSOR  
 and Stirling

EDINBURGH.  
 Printed by T. Cadell and W. Brown, and sold at their  
 Printing-house in the High Street, and by the Booksellers  
 in Town.



*The Vengeance of GOD,*

A N D

*The Impenitency of Men,*

DEMONSTRATED.



**M**OST Men, however sunk in Vice, seem to own the Existence of a GOD. And this Truth is so immurably connected with that of a *Providence*, that One, who has any Notion of a Supreme Being, must admit that He governs the World: And, if He does, these Monsters who defy his Omnipotence, by an obstinate Contempt of his Being and of the *essential* Laws of his Kingdom, must, whether they believe it or not, feel the Marks of his Vengeance. The most inveterate Disputers for Infidelity own, that Vice and Villany tend to the Destruction of Nations as well as Individuals; and there is a secret Witness, which points out to the most Abandoned the dreadful Day of Judgment.

*Sin*, or wilful Transgression against the known Laws of God, infinitely affects the whole Creation. The Conduct of Providence in this World teaches us, that *Sin* and *Punishment* are immutably connected together; and tho' the Admini-

stration of God be many Times *obscure*, yet every Age, and every Nation under Heaven, produce Monuments of the *Divine Vengeance against Sin*.

We ourselves in this Nation were lately set forth for an Example of *inraged Omnipotence*. Our National Wickedness and Impiety, which made us infamous in the Christian World, and which (by the *Connivance* of both the Civil and Ecclesiastical Power) has been suffered to elude Human Justice, God Almighty hath *avenged himself*.

'Tis certain, this Part of the Earth hath been defiled under the Inhabitants thereof, because they have transgressed the Laws, changed the Ordinance, broken the everlasting Covenant: Therefore hath the Curse devoured us. Our Children have been delivered up to the Famine; their Blood hath been poured out by the Force of the Sword: Our Wives have been bereaved of their Children, and become Widows: Their Men have been put to Death; and their young Men have been slain by the Sword; and the Slain of the Lord hath been from one End of the Land unto the other: They have not been lamented, nor gathered, nor buried; they have been *Dung to the Ground*.

Human Nature, even vitiated, cannot view this awful Scene untouch'd; and we must be debased to a State of Insensibility and Corruption unknown to Heathens, if, in our present Situation, Vice and Luxury can lull us asleep. When the very Blood of our Fathers, of our Children, of our Friends and Countrymen, is scarce cool; their Wounds, their dying Groans, their lifeless Corpses, may stare us with a Witness, and teach us, that *verily there is a God who judgeth in the Earth*: For in  
their

their *Agonies* and *Blood* we may read his Judgments.

And, if these Things do not move us, what will? *Their Fate we have seen.* Ours is in the Hands of Omnipotence; and if impenitent (nill we, will we) if he pleases, we must submit to Punishments still more severe and alarming. And, however we escape in this Life, Hell remains.

For, in Hell, the rebellious Worms are enabled by Omnipotence to support under Torments, which if any upon Earth could feel but for a Moment, the Possession of a whole World would not tempt them to endure for a second: And yet infinite Power sustains every one of them under this unspeakable Weight of Misery throughout Eternity. These are *suffering the Vengeance of eternal Fire*, and, by a Decree unchangeable as God, must tread to an Eternity the Wine-press of the Wrath of Almighty God.

What these tremendous Words mean, God only knows; but every profane Sinner, and every lukewarm Hypocrite, must eternally feel. For we that are alive are warned by God, that, *If any Man worship the Beast, and receive his Mark in his Forehead, or in his Hands, the same shall drink of the Wine of the Wrath of God, which is poured out without Mixture, into the Cup of his Indignation; and he shall be tormented in the Presence of the holy Angels, and in the Presence of the Lamb; and the Smoke of their Torment ascendeth up for ever and ever, and they have no Rest Day nor Night.*

And it is sure as the Word of God, that this dreadful Fate waits not only on those, upon whose Foreheads is visibly written open Profanity, which  
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is as certainly the Mark of the Beast as Popery, especially in a Country where Christians have no Temptation to the Church of Rome; but this eternal Vengeance awaits every Professor who is neither cold nor hot in the Cause of God, or who, with all his Zeal for his Church or his Party, is an Enemy to the Cross of Christ, conformed to the polluted Manners of the World, and a *Lover of Pleasures more than a Lover of God.*

Nay, in Heaven itself, infinite, awful and eternal are the Discoveries of the Evil of Sin. Angels, and the Spirits of just Men made perfect, here, contemplate this infinite Evil, in the Wounds of him who spoke them into Being: Here all intellectual Creatures that are, or ever shall be, have a Discovery of this Source of Misery, which as far surpasses all their Conceptions, as *awful Eternity* does this short Moment of Time.

So that Heaven, Earth and Hell conspire together, and Time joins with Eternity, in pointing out to Mortals the dreadful Consequences of *Sin* or *moral Evil*. Men do not generally deny these Things, yet they do not truly believe them; but Heaven and Earth shall pass away at the Look of him who declares them. Every Syllable of these Words of God shall remain stable as the Pillars of Eternity; nevertheless the lively Faith of them is scarce to be found upon Earth. We indeed do not say that God is false, and that the *Author of Truth is a Liar*; but we act as if we really thought so.

This damnable Infidelity is the Source of that inundation of open Profanity which has sunk this Nation into Guilt beyond that of Heathens. And

And *Edinburgh*, tho' it be the Seat of the Civil and Church Power, by the *scandalous Remissness* of both, is become a Sink of Pollution, a *Scandal* to the Gospel, and a *Curse* to succeeding Generations.

If an *open Contempt* of the very Being and Majesty of God, by an universal Breach of the essential Laws of his Kingdom; If general *Perjury*, nay, *Perjury* publickly practised and known, and yet not punished; If treading under Foot the Tremendous Name of God by the most *horrid Oaths and Curses*, openly, and which no Man can walk the Streets without hearing in every Corner; If *Adultery*, *Intrigue*, and Separations between Man and Wife; If *Tolerating* publick Stews, and the *Source of Intrigue and Lust, the Stage*; If *Injustice*, universal *Bribery* and *Corruption*; If *Revenge*, *Hatred*, *Malice* and *Discord* abounding, to the *unbinging* of all Society; If these, and many blacker Crimes, can involve a Nation in Guilt, we are exposed still further to the Wrath of God. And yet these Things, tho' condemned by Deists, we tolerate; and, lulled asleep in the *dead and lifeless* Form of a Profession, we rest secure in a *Connivance* at; or a *Commission* of, those horrid Evils: And, as if we were determined on Destruction, we tolerate and encourage a *Play-house*, and hire with our Money, poor as we are, a *Sett of Vipers* to spread this deadly Poison, and to lay wait for introducing all Ranks as publick Champions for Vice.

For these Things, *Hell* hath enlarged herself, and opened her Mouth without Measure; and the *Glory* and the *Multitude* and the *Pomp* descend into it.

The Stage may justly be looked upon as the Source of Debauchery : It has in all Ages spread Contempt of God and Religion, and promoted *Vice and Profanity, Lust and Intrigue, Adultery and Lewdness, secret Murders*, and other Evils too vile to name, in all Parts of the World. For this Reason it has been condemned by Christians; these Seventeen hundred Years, as sinful ; and, in some Places, those who frequented it were denied the Privileges of Christianity, as the Players themselves are still discharged the Society of Christians, and are, in many Parts, refused a Christian Burial.

Yet this *Source of Debauchery* has been encouraged here ; and many, from whom better Things might be expected, do countenance and attend it. It is for the Conviction of these, and for the preventing an Inundation of Wickedness from sweeping the whole Nation into Ruin, that the following Abstract from the Writings of a celebrated Author is now published, which demonstrates, *That the Stage is a corrupt sinful Entertainment, contrary to the whole Nature of Christian Piety, and constantly to be avoided by all Christians.*

It is hoped that *such* will be fully convinced, when they peruse the following Sheets, that it is so ; and for the future will avoid joining Hand in Hand with the Wicked in cherishing this Fountain of Vice and Pollution.

And indeed it is astonishing how any Christian can do this, considering the dreadful Effects of the Stage in all Ages and all Parts of the World.

As the Nature of Stage-plays, and their Sinfulness



ness, is here plainly demonstrated ; I shall only beg Leave to add a few Observations.

The Play-house must be allowed to be a Nursery for Lewdness.

In it every Eye that burns with Lust comes to satiate itself. It is, and ever has been, the Styre for this Herd of Swine to wallow in ; inasmuch as it is the *publick Rendezvous* of all the Rakes and Bawds and Whores throughout the World, and, next to publick Stews, it is, and ever has been reckoned by Christians, the most *infamous House* in the World ; this *Cage* for unclean Birds being as much *their Resort*, as the Church is that of the Servants of God. Like the Eagle to the Carcass, here they fly to devour immortal Souls, and to corrupt their Fellow-creatures.

Here the *Adulterer* has ever watched for his Prey ; and, from one fatal Moment in the Play-house, a Husband has commenced a *criminal Intrigue* with a Whore and a Mistress, which hath made him neglect his own Wife and Children. A virtuous Wife has hereby not only lost the *Heart* of her Husband, but the *Support* of her Family, that being now thrown away upon the Support of a Whore ; and so all that is dear to a Man is made a Sacrifice of to *raging and brutal Appetite*.

Here the *Modesty* of Wives has been first attacked ; and *those Ears*, that never listned to Smutt without Disdain, have from the licentious Stage learned to hear and relish *lawless Love*. Hence Husbands have appeared centemptible, and the simple Wife has fallen a Prey to the Fury of  
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her Passions. *Strife* and *Separation*, *Jealousies* and *Adultery*, have from this fatal Place sprung up in Families; and Husbands and Wives have hereby involved their innocent Children in *Infamy* and *Ruin*.

No attentive Mind, but must see these Evils every Day growing since the *Play-house* was tolerated in *Edinburgh*. Would People of Character and Virtue consider this; had Women Access to know what *vast Sums* are annually squandered away by their Husbands for *Husb-money*, and the Support of their *Whores*; could they view one Adulterer corrupting others; (and this Infection, as it has already made *Havock* of Thousands, so it annually spreads, and the whole Nation is in Danger of being set on Fire by it) There is not a virtuous Wife would cherish this *curfed House*, no more than she would take Fire in her Bosom, or lay a Foundation for the Ruin of her Family.

God forbid that I should so much as insinuate, that all are infected thus, that go to the Play-house! No, I believe the contrary; but am sorry there are such Numbers of *virtuous People* do so: But they know not what they do, nor the dreadful Consequences of doing so. They may be kept from those Evils themselves; but how long they may be so, God only knows: For many, once *virtuous Women*, have been cast down; and many strong Men have been slain in this Place.

The Wisdom of God tells us, that *the House of a lewd Woman is the Way to Hell, going down to the Chambers of Death*: And therefore our Hearts ought not to decline to her Ways, nor go astray in her Paths. Now, the Play-house (as  
I have

I have said) is the Place for lewd Men and Women to meet at. Virtuous People may imagine what they please; but, in this and all other Parts of the World, every Man that wants a *Mistress*, and every Woman that is in quest of a *Gallant*, do ever resort to the *Play-house*, as the Place which is understood by every-body to be for *their Purpose*: For in the common Opinion of Mankind, in the Judgment of Men of Gallantry in all Ages, and in the concealed Sentiments of the *Disputers* for the Stage, the Stage is, and always has been, reputed the publick *Rendezvous* of all the *gallantish* and *debauch'd* Persons in the Place; and, in most Parts of the World, it has turned all the neighbouring Houses around it into *common Stews*.

This is a *Fact* that no Contender for the Play-house can disown: And it is impossible from the Nature of Things it can be otherwise; for, where so many unclean Spirits constantly meet, they must propagate their *cursed Venom* all around them. And tho' virtuous People have no other Pretence in attending a Play, but for a little Diversion, and the Pleasure of spending two or three Hours agreeably; yet their Presence in *such a Place*, their Countenance to *such Company*, and their Example in patronizing *such infamous Designs*, is shocking to all good Men, and serves to propagate Vice in a Manner which, if they were aware of, they *would rather die* than be guilty of it.

The dismal Effects of the Play-house on a rising Generation are scarcely credible. There are Women who are a Disgrace to Human Nature,





and divert themselves with such, yet even the most debauch'd amongst them are not over-fond of Matrimony, being conscious of what Rique they run, as Things go, of having a *fine Lady* or a *Spend-thrift* palmed upon them, instead of a Wife.

In this insnaring Place haunts every poor and idle Rake, who lies at the Catch to rob Gentlemen of their Daughters. Here often a Daughter, from the Effects of a Play, has run off with One whom her Parents would have disdained to set with the Dogs of their Flock, and, from a *Wantonness of Thought*, has thrown herself into the Arms of a Wretch who hath made her miserable for Life.

Again, if we eye our *Schools* and *University*, nothing can be more destructive to them than the Play-house is; for by it the Scholars are entirely led aside from their Studies. Hence *Schools* and *Colleges* are fruitlessly attended, and *Gentlemen* pay Money to have their Sons taught *Wickedness* instead of *Learning*; and hence *Edinburgh* is turned so infamous, that many send their Children elsewhere for their Education. Apprentices and Servants are hereby likewise lost to their Masters, and too frequently are tempted to commence Thieves, in order to get Money to attend a Play, and afterwards a Bawdy-house. In short, the Play-house, since it was encouraged in *Edinburgh*, has spread *Pollution* and *Expence*, *Vice* and *Wickedness* all around it.

Nor can the keenest Disputer for the Stage show any Reason which can make it the Interest of *Edinburgh* to encourage it. And if we consider, that

our Actors are the Refuse of the *English* Players (which Sort of Cattle, when they fail in their Parts, have too often Recourse to *Smutt* and *Profanity*, in order to make their *Mimickry* palatable) we cannot hope for any polite Entertainment from such. And, to conclude, It is shocking to view a Place already reduced to *Poverty and Want*, and whose Inhabitants in general have hardly wherewithal to support their Families, drained of so much Money, which otherwise might circulate to the Advantage of many Families whose Heads attend here; and all this Money given to the *Refuse of the Refuse* of Mankind, for debauching the present, and laying a Foundation for the Destruction of the next Generation: Not to mention, that one could not imagine that the greatest Debauchees of both Sexes, whose *Fathers, Brothers, Kinsmen* or *Friends* are cast out as Dung on the Earth, could be so abandoned to all Rules of Decency, as to *sport and play* the Extravagants, when their Blood is scarce cool.

If therefore there is any Respect due to *Virtue and Honour*; if Pollution, Debauchery and Infamy can raise *Detestation* in Christians; if there is any *Regard* to be had to Posterity; if Parents have any *Bowels* for their Children; if those who have the Trust and Education of Youth, have any *Concern* for their *Morals* or Instruction; if *Magistrates* have any *Regard* for their Duty, their *Oaths*, or their Character; if the Ministers of Jesus Christ have any *Regard* for his Honour, or any *Compassion* for immortal Souls; they ought in a particular Manner to unite together against the Playhouse. And indeed, if a Country, already reduced



ced to *Poverty*, ought to suppress the greatest Mean of *Expendence and Luxury*; if *Intrigue and Lewdness* ought to be restrained; if a Nation involved in *Blood and Ruin*, and where we see *our Fathers, our Children and our dearest Friends* slain, and rotting away unburied upon the Fields; If in this Case we ought to behave with any *Decency*, let us not sport over their Wounds and Blood, nor add to the *Guilt* of a Nation already involved in Wickedness, by encouraging the Stage, that Source of Impiety and Vice: No! Let the Views of their dying Groans, their shed Blood, and mangled Bodies, check our Extravagancies. Let us view *their Fate*, and consider the Vengeance of God against a guilty Nation, and not provoke Omnipotence, by our Stupidity and Wickedness, to make us *ourselves* more dreadful Examples to those who shall survive us, than they have been made to us of the *Vengeance* of God, and the *Impenitency* of Men.

and to Poverty, ought to improve the greatest  
Means of Liberty and Justice; if the great and  
lastest ought to be restrained; if a Nation in-  
volved in Blood and Fury, and where we see our  
Fathers, our Country, and our dear Friends  
flung and tearing away and buried upon the Field;  
It is our Duty to behave with any De-  
cency, let us not fight over their Wounds and  
Blood, and add to the Grief of a Nation already  
involved in Wretchedness by encouraging the Rage  
that comes of Impetuosity and Vengeance. Let the  
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litudes, to make us any less more dreadful Ex-  
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have been made to us by the Vengeance of God,  
and the Impetuosity of Men.

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# A DISCOURSE

SHEWING

*That the Entertainment of the Stage is a corrupt and sinful Entertainment, contrary to the whole Nature of Christian Piety, and constantly to be avoided by all sincere Christians.*

**T**H E reading of *Plays*, or any other Books of that Kind, is a dangerous and sinful Entertainment, that corrupts our Hearts, and separates the Holy Spirit from us. You will now perhaps ask me, if it is unlawful for a Christian to go to the *Play-house*. I answer, that it is absolutely unlawful. As unlawful, as for a Christian to be a *Drunkard* or a *Glutton*, or to *Curse* and *Swear*. This I think will be easily prov'd.

For, let us resume the Doctrine of the Apostle, we are absolutely forbid all *corrupt Communication*, and for this important Reason, because it *grieves* and *separates* the Holy Spirit from us. Is it unlawful therefore to have any *corrupt Communication* of our own? And can we think it *lawful* to go to *Places set apart* for that Purpose? To give our Money, and *hire* Persons to corrupt our Hearts with ill Discourses, and inflame all the disorderly Passions of our Nature? We have the Authority of Scripture to affirm, That *evil Communication corrupts good Manners*; and that *unedifying Discourses grieve the Holy Spirit*. Now, the *third* Commandment is not more plain and express against *Swearing*, than this Doctrine is plain and positive against going to the *Play-house*. If you

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should see a Person that acknowledges the *third* Commandment to be a Divine Prohibition against Swearing, yet going to a *House*, and giving his *Money* to Persons, who were there met, to *Curse* and *Swear* in fine Language, and invent *musical Oaths* and *Imprecations*; would you not think him Mad in the highest Degree? Now consider, whether there be a less Degree of Madness in going to the Play-house. You own, that God has called you to a great Purity of Conversation, that you are forbid all *foolish Discourse*, and *filthy Jestings*, as expressly as you are forbid *Swearing*; that you are to let no *corrupt Communication* proceed out of your Mouth, but *such as is good for the Use of Edifying*; and yet you go to the *House set apart* for corrupt Communications, you hire Persons to entertain you with all Manner of *Ribaldry*, *Profaneness*, *Rant*, and *Impurity* of Discourse; who are to present you with *vile Thoughts* and *lewd Imaginations* in *fine Language*, and to make *wicked, vain and impure* Discourse more lively and affecting than you could possibly have it in any ill Company. Now, is not this fining with as high a Hand, and as grossly offending against the plain Doctrines of Scripture, as if you was to give your *Money* to be entertained with *musical Oaths* and *Curses*? You might reasonably think that *Woman* very ridiculous in her *Piety*, that durst not Swear herself, but should nevertheless frequent *Places* to hear *Oaths*. But you may as justly think her very ridiculous in her *Modesty*, who, tho' she dares not to say, or look, or do an immodest Thing herself, shall yet give her *Money*, to see *Women* forget the *Modesty* of their Sex, and talk *impudently* in a publick *Play-house*. If the *Play-house* was fill'd with *Rakes* and *ill Women*, there would be nothing to be wonder'd at in such an Assembly; for *such Persons* to be delighted with such Entertainments, is as natural, as for any *Animal* to delight in its proper *Element*: But for Persons who profess Purity and Holiness, who would not be suspected of *Immodesty* or *corrupt Communication*, for them to come under the Roof of a *House devoted* to such ill Purposes, and be pleas'd Spectators of such Actions and Discourses, as are the Pleasure of the most aban-

abandon'd Persons; for them to give their Money to be thus entertain'd, is such a Contradiction to all Piety and common Sense, as cannot be sufficiently expos'd.

Again, when you see the *Players* acting with Life and Spirit, Men and Women *equally bold* in all Instances of *Profaneness*, *Passion* and *Immodesty*, I dare say, you never suspect any of them to be Persons of *Christian Piety*. You can't even in your Imagination join Piety to such Manners, and such a Way of Life. Your Mind will no more allow you to join Piety with the Behaviour of the *Stage*, than it will allow you to think *Two* and *Two* to be *Ten*. And perhaps you had rather see your Son chain'd to a *Galley*, or your Daughter driving *Plow*, than getting their Bread on the *Stage*, by administering in so scandalous a Manner to the Vices and corrupt Pleasures of the World. Let this therefore be another Argument to prove the *absolute Unlawfulness* of going to a *Play*. For, consider with yourself, is the Business of *Players* so contrary to Piety, so inconsistent with the Spirit and Temper of a true Christian, that it is next to a Contradiction to suppose them united? How then can you take yourself to be *Innocent*, who *delight* in their Sins, and *hire* them to commit them? You may make yourself a Partaker of other Mens Sins, by Negligence, and for want of reproofing them; but certainly, if you stand by, and assist Men in their evil Actions, if you make their Vices your Pleasure and Entertainment, and pay your Money to be so entertain'd, you make yourself a Partaker of their Sins in a very high Degree: And consequently it must be as unlawful to go to a *Play*, as it is unlawful to approve, encourage, assist and reward a Man for *renouncing* a Christian Life. Let therefore every *Man* or *Woman* that goes to a *Play*, ask themselves this Question, Whether it suits with their Religion to act the *Parts* that are there acted? Perhaps they would think this as inconsistent with that Degree of Piety that they profess, as to do the vilest Things. But let them consider, that it must be a wicked and unlawful Pleasure, to delight in any Thing that they dare not do themselves. Let them also consider, that they are really *acting* those

Indecencies and Impieties themselves, which they think is the particular Guilt of the *Players*: For a Person may very justly be said to do that *himself*, which he *pays* for the Doing, and which is done for his Pleasure. You must therefore, if you would be consistent with yourself, as much abhor the Thoughts of being at a *Play*, as of being a *Player* yourself; for to think that you must forbear the one and not the other, is as absurd, as to suppose, that you must be temperate yourself, but may assist, encourage, and reward other People for their Intemperance. The Business of a *Player* is profane, wicked, lewd and immodest; to be any way therefore approving, assisting, or encouraging him in such a Way of Life, is as evidently sinful, 'as 'tis sinful to assist and encourage a Man in *Stealing*, or any other Wickedness.

To proceed. When I consider *Churches*, and the Matter of *Divine Service*, that it consists of holy Readings, Prayers, and Exhortations to Piety, there is Reason to think, that the House of God is a natural Means of promoting Piety and Religion, and rendering Men devout and sensible of their Duty to God. The very Nature of Divine Assemblies thus carried on has this direct Tendency. I ask you, Whether this is not very plain, that *Churches* thus employed should have this Effect?

Consider therefore the *Play-house*, and the Matter of the Entertainment there, as it consists of *Love-intreagues*, *blasphemous Passions*, *profane Discourses*, *lewd Descriptions*, *filthy Jest*s, and all the most extravagant Rant of wanton, vile, profligate Persons of both Sexes, heating and inflaming one another with all the *Wantonness* of Address, the *Immodesty* of Motion, and *Lewdness* of Thought, that Wit can invent; consider, I say, whether it be not plain, that a House so employed, is as certainly serving the Cause of *Immorality* and *Vice*, as the House of God is serving the Cause of *Piety*? For what is there in our *Church-Service* that shews it to be *useful* to Piety and Holiness, what is there in Divine Worship to correct and amend the Heart, but what is directly *contrary* to all that is doing in the *Play-house*? So that one may with the same Assurance affirm, that the *Play-house*, not only  
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when some very profane Play is on the *Stage*, but in its *daily common* Entertainment, is as certainly the *House of the Devil*, as the Church is the *House of God*. For tho' the Devil be not professedly worshipped by Hymns directed to him, yet most that is there sung is to his Service; he is there *obeyed* and *pleased* in as certain a Manner, as God is worshipped and honoured in the Church.

You must easily see, that this Charge against the *Play-house* is not the Effect of any *particular Temper* or *Weakness* of Mind, that it is not an *uncertain Conjecture* or *religious Whimsy*; but is a Judgment founded as plainly in the *Nature* and *Reason* of Things, as when it is affirmed that the House of God is of Service to Religion. And he that absolutely condemns the *Play-house* as wicked and corrupting, proceeds upon as much Truth and Certainty, as he that absolutely commends the *House of God* as holy, and tending to promote Piety.

When therefore any one pretends to vindicate the *Stage* to you as a proper Entertainment for holy and religious Persons, you ought to reject the Attempt with as much Abhorrence, as if he should offer to shew you, that our *Church-Service* was rightly formed for those Persons to join in who are *devoted to the Devil*. For to talk of the *Lawfulness* and *Usefulness* of the *Stage*, is fully as absurd, as contrary to the plain Nature of Things, as to talk of the *Unlawfulness* and *Mischief* of the Service of the Church. He therefore that tells you, that you may safely go to the *Play-house*, as an innocent, useful Entertainment of your Mind, commits the same Offence against common Sense, as if he should tell you, that it was dangerous to attend at Divine Service, and that its *Prayers* and *Hymns* were great *Pollutions* of the Mind.

For the Matter and Manner of *Stage-Entertainments*, is as undeniable a Proof, and as obvious to common Sense, that the House belongs to the Devil, and is the Place of his Honour, as the Matter and Manner of *Church-Service* proves that the Place is appropriated to God.

Observe therefore, that as you do not want the Assistance of any one to shew you the *Usefulness* and *Advantage* of Divine Service, because the Thing is plain, and  
speaks

speaks for itself; so neither, on the other Hand, need you any one to shew you the *Unlawfulness* and *Mischief* of the Stage, because there the Thing is equally plain, and speaks for itself. So that you are to consider yourself, as having the same Assurance that the *Stage* is wicked, and to be abhorred and avoided by all Christians, as you have that the Service of the Church is holy, and to be sought after by all Lovers of Holiness. Consider therefore, that your Conduct with relation to the *Stage* is not a Matter of *Nicety* or *scrupulous Exactness*, but that you are as certain that you do wrong in as notorious a Manner when you go to the *Play-house*, as you are certain that you do right when you go to *Church*.

Now it is of mighty Use to conceive Things in a right Manner, and to see them as they are in their own Nature. While you consider the *Play-house* as only a *Place of Diversion*, it may perhaps give no Offence to your Mind; there is nothing *shocking* in the Thought of it: But if you would lay aside this Name of it for a while, and consider it in its *own Nature* as it really is, you would find that you are as much deceived, if you consider the *Play-house* as only a *Place of Diversion*, as you would be if you considered the House of God only as a *Place of Labour*.

When therefore you are tempted to go to a *Play*, either from your own Inclination or the Desire of a Friend, fancy that you was asked in plain Terms to go to the Place of the *Devil's Abode*, where he holds his *filthy Court* of evil Spirits; that you was asked to join in an Entertainment, where he was at the *Head* of it, where the whole of it was in order to his Glory, that Mens Hearts and Minds might be separated from God, and plunged into all the Pollutions of Sin and Brutality. Fancy that you was going to a Place that as certainly belongs to the Devil, as the *Heathen Temples* of old, where *Brutes* were worshipped, where *wanton Hymns* were sung to *Venus*, and *drunken Songs* to the god of *Wine*. Fancy that you was as certainly going to the Devil's Triumph, as if you was going to those *old Sports*, where People committed Murder, and offered Christians to be devoured by wild Beasts,

for

for the Diversion of Spectators. Now, whilst you consider the *Play-house* in this View, I suppose that you can no more go to a *Play*, than you can expressly renounce your Christianity.

Consider therefore now, that you have not been frightening yourself with *groundless Imaginations*, but that what you have here fancied of the *Play-house* is as strictly true, as if you had been fancying, that, when you go to Church, you go into the House of God, where the heavenly Host attend upon his Service; and that when you there read the Scriptures, and sing holy Hymns, you join with the Quires above, and do God's Will on Earth as it is done in Heaven. For observe, I pray you, how justly that Opinion of the *Play-house* is founded: For was it a Joy and Delight to the Devil to see *Idols worshipped*, to see Hymns and Adorations offer'd up to impure and filthy Deities? Were Places and Festivals appointed for such Ends justly esteem'd Places and Festivals devoted to the Devil? Now give the Reason why all this was justly reckoned a Service to the Devil, and you will give as good a Reason why the *Play-house* is to be esteemed his *Temple*. For what tho' Hymns and Adorations are not offered to impure and filthy Deities, yet if *Impurity* and *Filthiness* is there the *Entertainment*, if immodest Songs, profane Rant, if Lust and Passion entertain the Audience, the Business is the same, and the Assembly does the *same Honour* to the Devil, tho' they are not gathered together in the Name of some *Heathen God*.

For Impurity and Profaneness in the Worshippers of the true God, is as acceptable a Service to the Devil, as Impurity and Profaneness in any Idolaters; and perhaps a *lewd Song* in an Assembly of Christians gives him greater Delight, than if it had been sung in a Congregation of *Heathens*.

If therefore we may justly say that a *House* or *Festival* was the Devil's, because he was *delighted* with it, because what was there done was an *acceptable Service* to him, we may be assured that the *Play-house* is as really the House of the Devil, as any other House ever was: Nay, it is reasonable to think, that the *Play-houses* in this Kingdom  
are



are a greater Pleasure to him than any *Temple* he ever had in the *Heathen World*. For as it is a greater Conquest to make the Disciples of Christ delight in *Lewdness* and *Profaneness*, than ignorant Heathens; so a *House*, that, in the Midst of *Christian Churches*, trains up Christians in *Lewdness* and *Profaneness*, that makes the Worshippers of Christ flock together in Crowds to rejoice in an Entertainment that is as contrary to the Spirit of Christ, as *Hell* is contrary to *Heaven*; a House so employed, may justly be reckoned a more delightful Habitation of the Devil, than any Temple in the Heathen World. When therefore you go to the *Play-house*, you have as much Assurance that you go to the Devil's peculiar Habitation, that you submit to his Designs, and rejoice in his Diversions (which are his best Devices against Christianity) you have as much Assurance of this, as that they who worshipped filthy Deities, were in reality Worshippers of the Devil.

Again, Consider those *old Sports* and *Diversions*, where Christians were sometimes thrown to wild Beasts, consider why such Sports might well be looked upon as the *Devil's Triumph*. I suppose you are at no stand with yourself whether you should impute such Entertainments to the Devil. Consider therefore why you should not as readily allow the *Stage* to be his Entertainment.

For was it a Delight to the Devil to see Heathens sporting with the bodily Death of Christians? And must it not be a greater Delight to him to see Christians sporting themselves in the Death of their Souls?

The Heathens could only kill the Body, and separate it from the Soul; but these Christian-Diversions murder the Soul, and separate it from God. I dare say, no Arguments could convince you that it was *lawful* to rejoice at those Sports which were thus defiled with human Blood; but then pray remember, that if the Death of the Soul be as great a Cruelty as the Death of the Body, if it be as dreadful for a Soul to be separated from God as to be separated from the Body, you ought to think it as entirely unlawful to enter that House where so many eternal Lives are sacrificed, or ever to partake of those Diversions which separate such Numbers of Souls from God.

Hence

Hence it appears, that if, instead of considering the *Play-house* as only a Place of Diversion, you will but examine what Materials it is made of, if you will but consider the Nature of the Entertainment, and what is there doing, you will find it as wicked a Place, as sinful a Diversion, and as truly the peculiar Pleasure and Triumph of the Devil, as any wicked Place or sinful Diversion in the Heathen World. When therefore you are ask'd to go to a *Play*, don't think that you are ask'd only to go to a *Diversion*, but be assur'd that you are ask'd to *yield* to the Devil, to go over to his *Party*, and to make one of his Congregation; that, if you do go, you have not only the Guilt of *buying* so much vain and corrupt Communication; but are also as certainly guilty of going to the Devil's House, and doing him the same Honour, as if you was to partake of some *Heathen Festival*.

You must consider, that all the Laughter there, is not only vain and foolish, but that it is a Laughter amongst Devils, that you are upon *profane Ground*, and hearing Musick in the very Porch of Hell.

Thus it is in the Reason of the Thing; and, if we should now consider the State of our *Play-house* as it is in Fact, we should find it answering all these Characters, and producing Effects suitable to its Nature: But I shall forbear this Consideration; it being as unnecessary to tell the Reader that our *Play-house* is in Fact the *Sink of Corruption and Debauchery*, that it is the general Rendezvous of the most profligate Persons of both Sexes, that it corrupts the Air, and turns the adjacent Places into publick Nuisances: This is as unnecessary as to tell him that the *Exchange* is a Place of *Merchandise*.

Now it is to be observed, that this is not the State of the *Play-house*, through any accidental Abuse, as any innocent or good Thing may be abused; but that Corruption and Debauchery are the truly natural and genuine Effects of the *Stage-Entertainment*. Let not therefore any one say that he is not answerable for those Vices and Debaucheries which are occasioned by the *Play-house*; for so far as he partakes of the Pleasure of the *Stage*, and is an Encourager of it, so far he is chargeable with those

Disorders which necessarily are occasioned by it. If Evil arises from our doing our Duty, or our Attendance at any *good Design*, we are not to be frightened at it; but if Evil arises from any Thing as its *natural* and *genuine* Effect, in all such Cases, so far as we contribute to the Cause, so far we make ourselves guilty of the Effects. So that all who any way assist the *Play-house*, or ever encourage it by their Presence, make themselves chargeable in some Degree with all the Evils and Vices which follow from it. Since therefore it cannot be doubted by any one whether the *Play-house* be a Nursery of Vice and Debauchery, since the evil Effects it has upon People's Manners is as visible as the Sun at Noon; one would imagine that all People of Virtue and Modesty should not only avoid it, but avoid it with the utmost Abhorrence; that they should be so far from entering into it, that they should detest the very Sight of it. For what a Contradiction is it to common Sense, to hear a Woman lamenting the miserable Lewdness and Debauchery of the Age, the vitious Taste and irregular Pleasures of the World, and at the same Time dressing herself to meet the lewdest Part of the World at the Fountain-head of all Lewdness; and making herself one of that Crowd, where every abandoned Wretch is glad to be present? She may fancy that she hates and abominates their Vices, but she may depend upon it, that till she hates and abominates the Place of vicious Pleasures, till she dare not come near an Entertainment which is the Cause of so great Debauchery, and the Pleasure of the most debauched People; till she is thus disposed, she wants the truest Sign of a real and religious Abhorrence of the Vices of the Age.

For, to wave all other Considerations, I would only ask her a Question or two on the single Article of *Modesty*. What is Modesty? Is it a little *mechanical outside* Behaviour, that goes no farther than a few *Forms and Modes* at particular Times and Places? Or is it a *real Temper*, a rational Disposition of the Heart, that is founded in *Religion*? Now, if Modesty is only a mechanical Observance of a little outside Behaviour, then I can easily perceive how a modest Woman may frequent *Plays*; there



there is no Inconsistency for such a one to be one Thing in one Place, and another in another Place ; to disdain an immodest Conversation, and yet at the same Time relish and delight in immodest and impudent Speeches in a publick *Play-house* : But if Modesty is a *real Temper* and Disposition of the Heart that is founded in the Principles of Religion, then I confess I cannot comprehend how a Person of such Modesty should ever come twice into a *Play-house*. For if it is Reason and Religion that has inspired her with a modest Heart, that makes her careful of her Behaviour, that makes her hate and abhor every Word, or Look, or Hint, in Conversation, that has the Appearance of Lewdness, that makes her shun the Company of such as talk with too much Freedom ; if she is thus modest in *common Life*, from a Principle of Religion, a Temper of Heart, is it possible for such a one (I don't say to seek) but to bear with the Immodesty and Impudence of the *Stage* ? For must not Immodesty and Impudence, must not loose and wanton Discourse be the same *hateful Things*, and give the same Offence to a modest Mind, in one Place as in another ? And must not that Place, which is the Seat of Immodesty, where Men and Women are trained up in Lewdness, where almost every Day in the Year is a Day devoted to the foolish Representations of *Rant*, *Lust*, and *Passion* ; must not such a Place, of all others, be the most odious to a Mind that is *truly modest* upon Principles of *Reason and Religion* ? One would suppose that such a Person should as much abominate the Place as any other filthy Sight, and be as much offended with an Invitation to it, as if she was invited to see an immodest Picture. For the Representations of the *Stage*, the inflamed Passions of Lovers there describ'd, are as gross an Offence to the Ear, as any Representation that can offend the Eye.

It ought not to be concluded, that because I affirm the *Play-house* to be an Entertainment *contrary* to Modesty, that therefore I accuse all People as void of Modesty who ever go to it. I might affirm that *Transubstantiation* is contrary to all *Sense* and *Reason*, but then it would be a wrong Conclusion to say, that I affirmed that all who be-

lieve it are void of all Sense and Reason. Now, as *Prejudices*, the Force of *Education*, the Authority of *Numbers*, the Way of the *World*, the Example of *great Names*, may make People *believe*, so the same Causes may make People *act* against *all Sense and Reason*, and be guilty of Practices which no more suit with the *Purity* of their Religion, than *Transubstantiation* agrees with *common Sense*.

To proceed. I once heard a young Lady thus excusing herself for going to the *Play-house*, That she went but seldom, and then in Company of her *Mother* and her *Aunt*; that they always knew their *Play* before-hand, and never went on the *Sacrament-week*: And what harm, pray, says she, can there be in this? It breaks in upon no Rules of my Life, I neglect no Part of my Duty, I go to *Church*, and perform the same Devotions at home, as on other Days. It ought to be observed, that this Excuse can only be allowed where the *Diversion* itself is *innocent*; it must therefore be first considered what the Entertainment is in itself, whether it be suitable to the Spirit and Temper of Religion: For, if it is right and proper in itself, it needs no Excuse; but if it be *wrong*, and *dangerous* to Religion, we are not to use it *cautiously*, but avoid it *constantly*.

*Secondly*, It is no Proof of the Innocency of a Thing, that it does not interfere with our *Hours of Duty*, nor break the Regularity of our Lives; for every wicked Way of spending Time, may yet be consistent with a regular Distribution of our Hours. She must therefore consider, not only whether such a Diversion hinders the Regularity of her Life, or breaks in upon her Devotions, publick or private; but whether it hinders or any way affects that *Spirit and Temper* which all her Devotions aspire after. Is it conformable to that heavenly Affection, that Love of God, that Purity of Heart, that Wisdom of Mind, that Perfection of Holiness, that Contempt of the World, that Watchfulness and Self-denial, that Humility and Fear of Sin? Is it conformable to these Graces, which are to be the *daily Subject* of all her Prayers? This is the only Way for her to know the *Innocency* of going

to a *Play*. If what she there hears and sees has no *Contrariety* to any *Graces* or *Virtues* which she prays for, if all that there passes be fit for the *Purity* and *Piety* of one that is led by the Spirit of Christ, and is working out her Salvation *with Fear and Trembling*, if the *Stage* be an Entertainment that may be thought according to the Will of God, then she disposes of an Hour very innocently, tho' her *Mother* or her *Aunt* were not with her. But if the contrary to all this be true, if most of what she there hears and sees be as *contrary* to the *Piety* and *Purity* of Christianity, as *Feasting* is contrary to *Fasting*; if the House which she supports by her Money, and encourages by her Presence, be a notorious Means of Corruption, visibly carrying on the Cause of Vice and Debauchery; she must not then think herself excus'd for being with her *Mother*.

Farther, She that is for going only to the *Play-house* now and then, with this Care and Discretion, does not seem to have enough consider'd the Matter, or to act by Reason: For if the *Stage* be an innocent and proper Entertainment, if in its own Nature it be as harmless and useful as *walking, riding, taking the Air, or conversing* with virtuous People; if this be the Nature of it, then there is no Need of this Care and Abstinence, a virtuous Lady need not excuse herself, that she goes but very seldom. But if it be the very Reverse of all this, if it be that Fountain of Corruption and Debauchery which has been observ'd; then to go to it at any Time, admits of no Excuse, but is as absurd, as contrary to Reason and Religion, as to do any other ill Thing with the same Care and Discretion. If you should hear a Person excusing her Use of *Paint* in this Manner, that truly she painted but *very seldom*, that she always said her Prayers first, that she never us'd it on *Sundays*, or the Week before the *Communion*; would you not pity such a *Mixture* of Religion and Weakness? Would you not desire her to use her Reason, and either allow *Painting* to be an innocent Ornament, suitable to the *Sobriety* and *Humility* of a Christian, or else to think it as unlawful at one Time as at another? Would you not think it strange that she should



should condemn *Painting* as odious and sinful, and yet think that the Regularity of her Life, the Exactness of her Devotions, and her Observance of Religion, might make it lawful for her to *paint now and then*? I don't doubt but you plainly see the Weakness and Folly of such a Pretence for *Painting* under such Rules at certain Times. And, if you would but as impartially consider your Pretences for going sometimes to the *Play-house*, you would certainly find them equally weak and unreasonable: For *Painting* may with more Reason be reckon'd an *innocent Ornament*, than the *Play-house* an innocent Diversion; and it supposes a greater Vanity of Mind, a more perverted Judgment, and a deeper Corruption of Heart, to seek the Diversion of the *Stage*, than to take the Pleasure of a *borrow'd Colour*.

I know you are offended at this *Comparison*, because you judge by your *Temper* and *Prejudices*, and don't consider the Things as they are in themselves by the pure Light of Reason and Religion. *Painting* has not been the Way of your *Family*; it is supposed to be the Practice but of *very few*, and those who use it, endeavour to *conceal* it; this makes you readily condemn it. On the contrary, your *Mother* and *Aunt* carry you to a *Play*, you see *virtuous* People there, and the same Persons that fill our *Churches*; so that your *Temper* is as much engaged to think it lawful to go sometimes to a *Play*, as it is engaged to think the Use of *Paint* odious and sinful. Lay aside therefore these *Prejudices* for a while; fancy that you had been train'd up in some Corner of the World in the Principles of Christianity, and had never heard either of the *Play-house* or *Painting*. Imagine now that you was to examine the Lawfulness of them by the Doctrines of Scripture. You would first desire to be told the Nature of these Things, and what they meant: They would tell you that *Painting* was the Borrowing of *Colours* from Art to make the Face look more beautiful. Now, tho' you found no express Text of Scripture against *Painting*, you would find that it was expressly against *Tempers* required in Scripture; you would therefore condemn it, as proceeding from a *Vanity* of Mind, a *Fondness* of Beauty; you

you would see that the Harm of *Painting* consisted in this, that it proceeded from a *Temper* of Mind contrary to the *Sobriety* and *Humility* of a Christian, which indeed is Harm enough ; because this *Humility* and *Sobriety* of Mind, is as *essential* to Religion, as Charity and Devotion : So that, in judging according to Scripture, you would hold it as unreasonable to *paint sometimes*, as to be sometimes *malicious, indevout, proud, or false*.

You are now to consider the *Stage*, you are to keep close to Scripture, and fancy that you yet know nothing of *Plays*. You ask therefore first what the *Stage* or *Play-house* is. You are told that it is a *Place* where all Sorts of People meet to be entertained with *Discourses, Actions, and Representations*, which are recommended to the Heart by beautiful Scenes, the Splendour of Lights, and the Harmony of Musick. You are told that these Discourses are the Inventions of Men of Wit and Imagination, which describe imaginary *Intragues* and *Scenes of Love*, and introduce *Men* and *Women* discoursing, raving, and acting in all the wild, indecent Transports of *Lust* and *Passion*. You are told that the Diversion partly consists of *lewd* and *profane* Songs, sung to fine Musick ; and partly of extravagant Dialogues between *immodest Persons*, talking in a *Stile* of *Love* and *Madness*, that is nowhere else to be found ; and entertaining the *Christian Audience* with all the Violence of *Passion*, Corruption of Heart, Wantonness of Mind, Immodesty of Thought, and profane Jest, that the Wit of the *Poet* is able to invent. You are told that the *Players*, Men and Women, are trained up to act and represent all the Descriptions of Lust and Passion in the *liveliest Manner*, to add a Lewdness of Action to lewd Speeches ; that they get their Livelihood by *Cursing, Swearing, and Ranting*, for three Hours together to an Assembly of *Christians*.

Now, tho' you find no particular Text of Scripture condemning the *Stage*, or *Tragedy*, or *Comedy*, in express Words ; yet, what is much more, you find that such Entertainments are a gross Contradiction to the *whole Nature* of Religion. They are not contrary to this or that particular Temper, but are contrary to that *whole Turn* of

of Heart and Mind which Religion requires. *Painting* is contrary to *Humility*, and therefore is always to be avoided as sinful: But the Entertainment of the *Stage*, as it consists of *blasphemous* Expressions, *wicked* Speeches, *Swearing*, *Cursing*, and *Profaning* the Name of God, as it abounds with *impious* Rant, *filthy* Jest, *distracted* Passions, gross Descriptions of *Lust*, and *wanton* Songs, is a *Contradiction* to every *Doctrine* that our Saviour and his Apostles have taught us. So that to abhor *Painting* at all Times, because it supposes a Vanity of Mind, and is contrary to *Humility*, and yet think there is a lawful Time to go to the *Play-house*, is as contrary to common Sense, as if a Man should hold that it was lawful sometimes to offend against *all the Doctrines* of Religion, and yet always unlawful to offend against *any one* *Doctrine* of Religion.

If therefore you was to come (as I supposed) from some Corner of the World where you had been used to live and judge by the Rules of Religion, and, upon your Arrival here, had been told what *Painting* and the *Stage* was; as you would not expect to see Persons of *religious Humility* carrying their Daughters to *Paint-shops*, or inviting their *pious Friends* to go along with them; so much less would you expect to hear that *devout*, *pious* and *modest* Women carried their Daughters, and invited their virtuous Friends to meet them at the *Play*. Least of all could you imagine, that there were any People *too pious* and *devout* to indulge the Vanity of *Painting*, and yet not *devout* or *pious* enough to *abhor* the *Immodesty*, *Profaneness*, *Ribaldry*, *Immorality*, and *Blasphemy* of the *Stage*.

To proceed. A *polite Writer* (a) of a late Paper thought he had sufficiently ridiculed a certain Lady's Pretension to *Piety*, when, speaking of her *Closet*, he says,

*Together by her Prayer-book and Paint,  
At once t' improve the Sinner and the Saint.*

Now whence comes it that this *Writer* judges so rightly,  
and

(a) *Spectator*, No. 79.



and speaks the Truth so plainly in the Matter of *Painting*? Whence comes it that the Generality of his Readers think his Observation just, and join with him in it? It is because *Painting* is not yet an *acknowledged Practice*, but is for the most Part reckoned a *shameful Instance* of Vanity. Now as we are not prejudiced in favour of this Practice, and have no Excuses to make for our *own Share* in it, so we judge of it impartially, and immediately perceive its Contrariety to a religious Temper and State of Mind. This *Writer* saw this in so strong a Light, that he does not scruple to suppose that *Paint* is as natural and proper a Means to improve the *Sinner*, as the Prayer-book is to improve the *Saint*.

I should therefore hope, that it need not be imputed to any *Sourness* of Temper, religious *Weakness* or *Dulness* of Spirits, if a *Clergyman* should imagine, that the Profaneness, Debauchery, Lewdness, and Blasphemy of the *Stage*, is as natural a Means to improve the *Sinner*, as a *Bottle of Paint*; or if he should venture to shew that the *Church* and the *Play-house* are as ridiculous a Contradiction, and do no more suit with the *same Person*, than the *Prayer-book* and *Paint*.

Again, Suppose you were told that the *holy Angels* delight in the Repentance and Devotion of Christians, that they attend at God's *Altar*, and rejoice in the Prayers and Praises which are there offer'd unto God; I imagine you could easily believe it, you could think it very agreeable to the Nature of such good Beings to see *fallen Spirits* returning unto God. Suppose you were told also, that these same heavenly Beings delighted to be with Men in their *Drunkenness*, *Revellings* and *Debaucheries*, and were as much pleased with their Vices and Corruptions, as with their Devotions, you would know that both these Accounts could not possibly be true; you could no more doubt in your Mind whether *good Angels*, that delight in the Conversion and Devotion of Christians, do also delight in their Vices and Follies, than you can doubt whether the same Person can be *alive* and *dead* at the same Time. You would be sure, that, in Proportion as they delighted in the *Piety* and *Holiness* of Men, they must

necessarily in the same Degree abhor and dislike their *Vices* and *Corruptions*. So that, supposing the Matter of our *Church-Service*, the Excellency of its Devotions, its heavenly Petitions, its lofty Hymns, its solemn Praises of the most High God, be such a glorious Service as invites and procures the Attendance of that *blessed Quire*; if this be true, I suppose you are as certain as you can be of the plainest Truth, that the *Filkiness*, the *Rant*, *Ribaldry*, *Profaneness*, and *Impiety* of the *Stage*, must be the Hatred and Aversion of those *good Spirits*. You are sure that it is as impossible for them to behold the *Stage* with Pleasure, as to look upon the *holy Church* with Abhorrence.

Consider a while on this Matter, and think how it can be lawful for you to go to a *Place*, where, if a *good Angel* was to look with Pleasure, it would cease to be good? For as that which makes Angels good, is the same *right Temper* which makes you good; so the same Tempers which would render Angels evil, must also render you evil. You may perhaps tell me, that you are not an *Angel*. I grant it; neither are you Jesus Christ, neither are you God; yet you are called to be *holy* as Jesus Christ was *holy*, and to be *perfect* as your Father which is in Heaven is *perfect*. Tho' you are not an *Angel*, yet it is Part of your glorious Hope, that you shall be *as the Angels of God*; so that, as you are capable of their Happiness, you must think yourself obliged to be as like them in your Temper, as the Infirmary of your present State will permit. If *Angels* are to rejoice in singing the Praises of God, tho' their Joy may exceed yours, yet you are as much obliged to your Degree of Joy in this Duty as they are. Angels, by the Light and Strength of their Nature, may abhor all Manner of Sin with stronger Aversion, a higher Degree of Abhorrence; yet you are as much obliged to abhor all Manner of Sin as they are. So that it is no more lawful for you to delight in impure, profane Diversions, which *good Angels* abhor, than it is lawful for you to hate those *Praises* and *Adorations* which are their Delight.

You are to consider also, that these *contradictory Tempers*

*pers* are no more possible in the *same Men*, than in the *same Angels*; 'tis no more possible for your Heart truly to delight in the Service of the Church, to be in earnest in all its Devotions, and at the same Time delight in the Entertainment of the *Stage*, than it is possible for an *Angel* to delight in them both.

You may fancy that you relish these Entertainments, and at the same Time relish and delight in the Service of God, and are very hearty in your Devotions; you may fancy this, as *cruel Men* may fancy themselves to be *merciful*, the *Covetous* and *Proud* may fancy themselves to be *humble* and *heavenly-minded*; but then take notice, that it is all but mere Fancy: For it is as impossible to be really devout with your Reason and Understanding, and at the same Time delight in the Entertainment of the *Stage*, as 'tis impossible to be really *charitable*, and delighting in *Malice* at the same Time. There is indeed a *Falseness* in our Hearts, a *Meckanism* in our Constitution, which will deceive those who do not constantly *suspect* themselves. There are *Forms of Devotion*, little Rules of Religion, which are fixed in us by *Education*, which we can no more part with, than we can part with any other Customs which we have long used. Now this makes many People think themselves mighty pious, because they find it is not in their Nature to forbear or neglect such and such *Forms of Piety*; they fancy that Religion must have its Seat in their Heart, because their Heart is so unalterable in *certain Rules* of Religion. Thus a Person, that is exact in his Times of Prayer, will perhaps think himself much injured, if you was to tell him that it is his *want of Piety* that makes him relish the Diversion of the *Stage*; his Heart immediately justifies him against such an Accusation, and tells him how constant he is in his Devotions: Whereas it is very possible, that he may have but little more Piety than what consists in some *Rules* and *Forms*, and that his Constancy to such Rules may be owing to the same Cause which makes others constantly *sleepy* at such an Hour; that is, the mere *Meckanism* of his Constitution, and the Force of *Custom*. This is the State of Numbers of People, otherwise it



would not be so common to see the same People constant and unalterable in *some Rules* of Religion, and as constant and unalterable in *Pride, Passion, and Vanity*.

Again, There are many other Instances of a false Piety. Some People feel themselves capable of *religious Fervours*, they have their Passions frequently affected with *religious Subjects*, who from thence imagine that their Hearts are in a true State of Religion. But such a Conclusion is very deceitful ; for the mere *Mechanism* and natural Temper of our Bodies, and our present Condition, may be the chief Foundation of all this. Thus a *Lady* may find herself, as she thinks, *warm* in her Devotions, and praise God at *Church* with a Sense of Joy ; she thinks she is very good, because she finds herself thus *affected* and *pleased* with the Service of the *Church* ; whereas it may be, the very Reason why she is more than ordinarily devout, and thinks it a Pleasure to praise God, is owing to a Flow of her Passions. This agreeable Expectation has so put her Spirits in Order, that she can be very *thankful* to God all the Time she is at *Church*.

The same Temper is very frequent in *common Life*. You meet a Person who is very fond of you, full of Affection, and pleased with every Thing you say or do ; you must not imagine that he has more *Friendship* for you than when he saw you last, and hardly took any Notice of you ; The Matter is only this, the Man is in a *State of Joy* at something or other, he is pleased with *himself*, and so is easily pleased with you ; stay but till this *Flow of Spirits* is gone off, and he will shew you no more Affection than he us'd to do. This is the Religion of *Numbers* of People ; they are devout by *Fits* and *Starts*, in the same Manner as they are pleased by *Fits* and *Starts* ; and their Devotion at those very Times is no more a Sign of true *Piety*, than the Civility and Compliments of a Person *overjoyed* are Signs of true *Friendship*. But still these little Flashes of Devotion make People think themselves in a State of Religion.

Take another Instance of a false Piety of another kind : *Junius* has been orthodox in his Faith, a Lover of Church-men, a Hater of Hereticks, these several Years ;  
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he is the first that is sorry for a *dangerous Book* that is come out, he is amazed what People would be at by such Writings, but thanks God there is Learning enough in the World to confute them. He reads all the Confutations of *Atheists, Deists, and Hereticks*; there is only one Sort of Books for which *Junius* has no Taste, and that is Books of *Devotion*; He freely owns that they are not for his Taste, he does not *understand their Flights*.

If another Person was to say so much, it would be imputed to his want of Piety; but because *Junius* is known to be an Enemy to Irreligion, because he is constantly at Church, you suppose him to be a pious Man, 'tho' he thus confesses that he wants the *Spirit of Piety*. It is in the same Manner that *Junius* deceives himself; his Heart permits him to neglect Books of Devotion, because his Heart is constantly shewing him his *Zeal* for Religion, and *Honour* for the Church; this makes him no more suspect himself to want any Degrees of Piety, than he suspects himself to be a Favourer of *Heresy*. If he never thinks any ill of himself, if he never suspects any Falseness in his own Heart, if he is prejudiced in favour of all his own Ways, it is because he is prejudiced in favour of all *orthodox Men*. *Junius* reads much Controversy, yet he does not take it ill that you pretend to inform him in Matters of *Controversy*; on the contrary, he never reads Books of Devotion, yet is angry if you pretend to correct him in Matters of that kind. You may suppose him mistaken in something that he is always studying, and he will be thankful to you for setting him right; but if you suppose him mistaken in Things that he never applies himself to, if you suppose that any Body knows what *Humility, Heavenly-mindedness, Devotion, Self-denial, Mortification, Repentance, Charity*, or the *Love of God* is, better than he, you provoke his Temper, and he won't suffer himself to be informed by you. *Great Numbers* of People are like *Junius* in this Respect; they think they are very religious, by listening to Instruction upon *certain Points*, by reading *certain Books*, and being ready to receive farther Light, who yet can't bear to be instructed in Matters where they are most likely

likely to be deceived, and where the Deceit is of the utmost Danger. They will be thankful for your telling them the particular Times in which the *Gospels* were writ, for explaining the Word *Euroclydon*, or *Anathema Maranatha*, they will be glad of such useful Instruction; but if you touch upon such Subjects as really concern them in a high Degree, such as try the *State* and *Way* of their Lives, these religious People, who are so fond of religious Truths, cannot bear to be thus instructed.

What is the Reason that, when we consult *Lawyers*? It is not to hear Harangues upon the *Law*, or its several *Courts*; it is not to hear the Variety of Cases that concern other People; but it is to be instructed and assisted in our *own Case*. Why do we thank them for dealing impartially with us, for searching and examining into the true State of our *Case*, and informing us of every Thing that concerns us? What is the Reason that we apply to *Physicians*? Not to hear the Rise and Progress of *Physick*, or the History of Disputes amongst them; not to hear of other People's Distempers, but to tell them our own *particular State*, and learn the *Cure* of our own Distempers. Why do we thank them for being *nicely exact* in searching us out, for examining into every Part of our Lives, our Ways of *Eating*, *Drinking*, and *Sleeping*, and not suffering us to deceive ourselves with wrong Opinions and Practices? What is the Reason why we act thus consistently, and in the same Manner, in both these Instances? Now the only Reason is this, because in both these Instances we are *really in earnest*. When you are in earnest in your Religion, you will act as consistently, and in the same Manner there. When you desire *solid Piety*, as you desire *sound Health*, your chief Concern will be about your *own Disorders*; you will thank *Divines* and *Casuits* for making you their chief Care; you will be glad to have them examine and search into your Ways of Life, to be rightly informed of the Follies, Vanities, and Dangers of your State. You will be glad to read those Books, and consult those *Casuits*, which are most *exact* and *faithful* in discovering your Faults, who question and examine all your Ways, who discover to you  
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your *secret* Corruptions, and *unsuspected* Follies, and who are best able to give you the surest Rules of arriving at Christian Perfection; when you are in earnest in your Religion, you will as certainly act in this Manner, as you act in the same Manner with the *Lawyer* or *Physician*. Take this also for an undeniable Truth, That, till you do act in this Manner, you are not in earnest in your Religion. This therefore is a good Rule to examine yourself by. Do you find that you act in Religion as you do in other Cases where you are in earnest? Are you as suspicious of yourself, as fearful of Mistake, as watchful of Danger, as glad of Assistance, as desirous of Success, as in other Matters where your Life or Fortune are at Stake, or where your Heart is engaged? Never imagine that your Religion is founded in a true Fear of God, and a hearty Desire of Salvation, till you find yourself acting as you do in other Matters where your Fears are great, and your Desires hearty. If you had rather read Books that *entertain* the Mind, than *correct* the Heart; if you had rather hear a *Casualist* examine other People's Lives, than yours; if you had rather hear him talk of the Excellency and Wisdom of Religion, than be exact in trying the Excellency and Wisdom of your Way of Life; you must take it for granted, that you are not in earnest in the Reformation of your Life, and that there are *some* *Tempers* in you more strong and powerful, that more rule and govern you, than the Fear of God, and a Desire of Salvation. To return now to my Subject.

I had observed that People who are religious upon a true Principle, who are devout with their *Reason* and *Understanding*, cannot possibly either *relish* or *allow* the Entertainment of the *Stage*. I observed that these contradictory Tempers, a Delight in the Offices and Divine Services of the *Church*, and a Delight in the Entertainments of the *Stage*, are no more possible to be in the same *good Men*, than in the same *good Angels*. This made it necessary for me to step a little aside from my Subject, to consider some *false Appearances* of Religion, which are chiefly founded in *natural Temper*, *Custom*, *Education*, and the *Way* of the World; which yet so far deceive  
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People, as to make them fancy themselves in a good State of Religion, while they live and act by another Spirit and Temper.

Now, I readily own, a Man may come up to these Appearances of Religion, he may carry on a Course of such Piety as this, and yet *relish* the Diversion of the Stage. It is no Contradiction for a Man to like to say his Prayers, to be often delighted with the Service of the Church, to hear *Sermons*, to read *Divinity*, to detest *Hereticks*, and yet find a constant *Pleasure* in the vain Entertainments of the Stage. The World abounds with Instances of People who *swear*, *drink*, and *debauch*, with all these *Appearances* of Religion. Now, as we are sure that, where we see these Vices, those Persons have only an *Appearance* of Religion which is founded in something else than a true Fear of God; so wherever we see sober and regular People, Lovers of the Church, and Friends to Religion, taking the Pleasure of the Stage, we may be as sure that their Religion is *defective*, and founded in something that is *weak*, and *false*, and *blind*, that permits them to act so inconsistently: For the Reasoning is full as strong in one Case as in the other. Now altho' I would not have People to be solely guided by what they feel, or think they feel in their own Minds; yet this we may depend upon, as certain in our Tempers, that we never *love* or *affect* any Thing *truly*, but we *hate* and *avoid* all that is *contrary* to it in an equal Degree: So that we may be assured, that all that Love, or Zeal, or Affection, that we pretend for any Thing, is but mere Pretence, and a *blind Motion*, unless it appears by a zealous, lively Abhorrence of every Thing that is *contrary* to it. Upon this Ground I again affirm, that it is impossible for truly religious People to *bear* the Entertainments of the Stage. For consider only the Matter in this short View. A truly religious Person is to love and fear, and adore God, with *all his Heart*, and *with all his Soul*, and *with all his Strength*; Now I ask you, who it is that has this true Love of God? Is it he that delights in Profaneness at *all Times*? Or is it he that can bear with Profaneness *sometimes*? Or is it he that abhors  
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and avoids it at *all Times* and in *all Places*? Which of these Three hath a Right to be esteemed a true Lover of God? Now he that goes to a *Play* at any Time, tho' he may say that he does not delight in *Profaneness*, yet he must own, that he can sometimes, and in some Places, bear with Profaneness. For Profaneness of some kind or other is in most of our *Plays* almost as common as the Name of God in Scripture. But I will suppose it were only now and then, and that no Profaneness either of Thought or Expression happened above *twice* or *thrice* in an Entertainment; yet this is *Profaneness*: And he that can bear with *so much*, that can seek the Entertainment as a Pleasure, must acknowledge, that tho' he does not delight in Profaneness as such, yet he can *bear* with Profaneness for the Sake of *other Delight*. Now ask yourself, Has not he a truer Love of God, whose Piety will not suffer him to bear with Profaneness at any Time, or in any Place, or for any Pleasure? Am I not therefore supported by plain Reason and common Sense, when I affirm, that it is for want of true Piety that any People are able to bear the Entertainment of the *Stage*?

You see also, that no higher Degree of Piety is required to fill one with a constant Abhorrence of the *Stage*, than such a Piety as implies an Abhorrence of Profaneness at *all Times*, and in *all Places*.

When you are thus pious, when you thus love God, you will have a Piety, a Love of God, that will not suffer you to be at an Entertainment that has any *Mixture* of Profaneness. Now as there must be this manifest Defect in true Piety before you can bear with the Profaneness of the *Stage*, so, if you consider every other Part of the Character of a truly religious Man, you will find that there must be the same Defect thorow the whole of it before he can be fit for such Diversion.

You tell me that you love the *Church*, and rejoice at the Returns of Divine Service, tho' you now and then go to a *Play*. Now consider what it is which these Words mean; *If you love and delight in the Service of the Church*, then you love to be in a *State* of Devotion, you love to *draw near* to God, you love to be made sensible



of the *Misery*, *Guilt*, and *Weight* of Sin; you love to *abhor* and *deplore* your Iniquities; and to lament the *Misery* and *Vanity* of human Life; you love to hear the Instructions of *Divine Wisdom*, to *raise* your *Soul* unto God, and *sing* his Praises; you love to be on your Knees *praying* against all the *Vanities* and *Follies* of Life, and for all the *Gifts* and *Graces* of God's Holy Spirit.

Now all this is implied in the true Love of *Church-Service*; for unless you love it *for what it is*, and because you feel its Excellency, your Love is only a *blind mechanical* Motion: But if you love it in Truth and Reality, if you are thus affected with it, because all its Parts so highly suit the Condition of human Nature; whilst you are thus disposed, you can no more relish the *wicked Spirit* and *foolish Temper* of *Stage-Entertainments*, than *sincere dying* Penitents can delight in the *Guilt* of their Sins.

Never imagine therefore that you are *sincerely* affected with the *Confessions* of the Church, or that you are truly *glad* for the Return of those Hours which humble you in the Sight of God; never imagine that you truly feel the *Misery* and *Weight* of Sin, or *sincerely* lament the Corruption of your Nature, whilst you dare go to the Fountain-head of Corruption, the Place where Sin reigns and exercises its highest Power.

Never imagine that you have the Spirit of Devotion, that your Heart is renewed with the Holy Ghost, that it truly rejoices in the Means of Grace, and the Hope of Glory; never imagine that it is your Joy and Delight to worship God in the Beauty of Holiness, to send up your Soul to him in Prayers and Praises, so long as the Way of the *Stage*, its *impious* Nonsense, *vile* Jest, *profane* Passions, and *lewd* Speeches, are not your utter Abhorrence. For it is not more absurd to believe, that a *corrupt* Tree may bring forth *good Fruit*, than to believe, that a pious Mind, truly devoted to God, should taste and relish the Entertainment of the *Stage*: For the *Taste* and *Relish* of the Mind is a more certain Sign of the State and Nature of the Mind, than the *Quality* of *Fruit* is a Sign of the State and Nature of *Trees*.

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Had the *impure Spirits*, which asked our blessed Saviour to suffer them to enter into the *Herd of Swine*, said at the same Time, that it was their only *Delight* and *Joy* to dwell in the Light and Splendour of God, no one could have believed them, any more than he could believe Light and Darknes to be the same Thing.

When you have the Spirit of Christ, when you are devoted to God, when Purity, Holiness and Perfection is your real Care, when you desire to live in the Light of God's Holy Spirit, to act by his Motions, to rise from Grace to Grace, till you are finished in Glory; it will be as impossible for you, whilst you continue so disposed, either to *seek* or *bear* the Entertainment of the *Stage*, as it is impossible for *pure* and *holy Spirits* to ask to enter into a *Herd of Swine*. If you want the Delight of so corrupt an Entertainment, so contrary to the *Spirit* and *Purity* of Religion, you ought no more to believe yourself, when you pretend to true Piety and Devotion, than you ought to have believed those *impure Spirits*, if they had pretended to have been *Angels of Light*. For this is absolutely certain, and what you ought carefully to consider, that nothing ever gives us any Pleasure, but what is *suitable* to the *State* and *Temper* of Mind that we are then in: So that, if the *Corruption*, the *Immorality*, the *profane Spirit* and *wanton Temper* of the *Stage-Entertainment* can give you any Pleasure, you are as sure that there is *something* like *all these Vices* in your Heart, as you can be of any Thing that relates to a human Mind.

*Lastly*, Ask yourself, when you think that you have a true Love for Divine Service, whether he is not a truer Lover of it, whose Soul is so *fashioned* to it, so *deeply affected* with it, that he can delight in nothing that is *contrary* to it; who can bear with *no* Entertainment that is made up of *Speeches*, *Passions*, *Harangues*, and Songs, so *opposite* to the Wisdom, the Discourses, Instructions and Hymns of Divine Service. This, I believe, you cannot deny; and if this cannot be denied, then it must be owned as a certain Truth, that he who can bear with the

*Stage-Entertainment*, has this farther Defect, that he wants the *true Love* of Divine Service.

Again, It is Part of a truly religious Man to *love* the Scriptures, and *delight* in reading them; you say this is your Temper tho' you go to *Plays*. I answer, That it is for want of a true Love and Delight in the Scriptures that you are able to relish *Plays*. You may perhaps so love the Scriptures, that you may think it your Duty to read them, and desire to understand them; but when you once so love the Scriptures, as to *love* to be like them, to desire that the Spirit and Temper of Scripture may be the *one Spirit and Temper* of your Life. When, for Instance, you love this Doctrine, *Strive to enter in at the straight Gate. If thy right Eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee.* When you are of the same Mind with this Scripture, *Be sober, be vigilant; because your Adversary the Devil, as a roaring Lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour* (a).

When you are intent upon this Truth, *For we must all appear before the Judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the Things done in his Body* (b). When this Text has taken Possession of your Heart, *Seeing then that all these Things must be dissolved, what Manner of Persons ought ye to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness* (c)?

When you resign up your whole Soul to this Exhortation, *Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in Heart* (d). When your Heart can truly bear you Witness to this Doctrine, that you *put on the whole Armour of Christ, that you may be able to stand, That you live by Faith and not by Sight, pressing after the Prize of your high Calling.* When you thus love and delight in the Scriptures, when you thus enter into its Spirit and Temper, when its Purity is your Purity, its Fears, and Hopes, and Joys, are your Fears, and Hopes, and Joys; you will find yourself one of those who constantly and at *all Times* abominate the Folly, Impertinence and Profaneness of the *Stage*.

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(a) 1 Pet. v. 8. (b) 2 Cor. v. 10. (c) 2 Pet. iii. 11.  
(d) Mat. xi. 29.



Let me desire you, when you are dress'd for a *Play*, to read over our Saviour's Divine Sermon on the *Mount*, before you go; try whether your Soul is full of the Spirit that is there taught; examine whether you then feel in your Heart such a Love of the Scripture, as to love *those Conditions* of Blessedness that are there describ'd; *Blessed are the Poor in Spirit: Blessed are they that Mourn: Blessed are they that Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness.* Do you find yourself in these Heights of *Holiness*? Is your Soul reformed, purified and exalted according to *these Doctrines*? Or can you imagine, that you are *conforming* yourself to those Doctrines, that you *depart* from none of them, when you are preparing yourself for a Pleasure, which is the proper Pleasure of the most corrupt and debauched Minds? *Blessed are the Pure in Heart, for they shall see God.* Can you think that you are rightly affected with this Doctrine, that you are labouring after this Purity, that you are preparing to see God, when you are going to an Entertainment to which they ought only to go who have no Thoughts of seeing God, nor any Desires after that Purity which prepares us for it?

*Lastly*, Another Virtue, essential to Christian Holiness, is *Chastity*; our blessed Saviour has given us the Measure of this Virtue in these Words, *But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a Woman to lust after her, hath committed Adultery with her already in his Heart.* We are sure therefore that this Virtue is not preserved, unless we keep ourselves clear from all immodest Thoughts and impure Imaginations; we are sure also that the Guilt of these is like the Guilt of Adultery. This is the Doctrine of Christ. Look now into the *Play-house*, and think whether any Thing can be imagined more contrary to this Doctrine?

For, not to consider the monstrous Lewdness and Immodesty of the *Stage*, take it in its *best State*, when some admir'd *Tragedy* is upon it: Are the extravagant Passions of *distracted Lovers*, the impure Ravings of *inflam'd Heroes*, the tender Complaints, the Joys and Torments of Love, and *gross Descriptions* of Lust; are the

the *indecent* Actions, the amorous Transports, the *wanton Address* of the Actors, which make so great a Part of the *most sober and modest* Tragedies; are these Things an Entertainment consistent with this Christian Doctrine? You may as well imagine, that Murder and Rapine are consistent with Charity and Meekness. I hope it will not now be said, that I have spent too much Time upon a Subject that seems not necessary in a Treatise upon *Christian Perfection*. For tho' these Things, are generally lookt upon as *little*, because they are called *Pleasures* and *Diversions*, yet they may as justly be call'd *Vices* and *Debaucheries*; they affect Religion, as *Lies* and *Falseness* affect it, in the very Heart and Essence, and render People as incapable of true Piety, as any of the grossest Indulgences of Sensuality and Intemperance. And perhaps it may be true, that more People are kept Strangers to the true Spirit of Religion by what are called *Pleasures*, *Diversions*, and *Amusements*, than by *confess'd Vices*, or the Cares and Business of Life. I have now only one Thing to beg of the *Reader*, that he would not think it a sufficient Answer to all this, to say in general, that it is a Doctrine too *strict* and *rigid*; but that he would consider every Argument as it is in itself, not whether it be strict and rigid, but whether it be false Reasoning, or more strict and rigid than the Doctrine of Scripture. If it prescribes a Purity and Holiness which is not according to the Spirit and Temper of the Scriptures, let it be rejected, not as too strict and rigid, but as a Species of false Worship, as vain and ridiculous as *Idolatry*: But, if what is here asserted be highly conformable to the most plain Doctrines of Scripture, the saying that it is too strict and rigid, is of no more Weight against it, than if it was said that it was *too true*. It is not my Intention to trouble the World with any particular Notions of my own; or to impose any unnecessary Rules, or fancied Degrees of Perfection upon any People: But in declaring against the *Stage*, as I have done, I have no more follow'd any particular Spirit or private Temper, or any more exceeded the plain Doctrine of Scripture, than if I had declared against *Drunkenness* and *Debauchery*. Let  
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a Man but be so much a *Christian*, as not to think it too *high a Degree* of Perfection, or too *strict and rigid*, to be in earnest in these two Petitions, *Lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from Evil*; and he has Christianity enough to persuade him, that it is neither too high a Perfection, nor too *strict and rigid*, constantly to declare against, and always to avoid, the Entertainment of the *Stage*.

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